

**PREPARED REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
AT THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
TOWN HALL MEETING
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 17, 2011**

Thank you all for coming. Today, we're setting a new milestone; this is the first time in the history of the Commission that we're using technology to link Headquarters and all the Commission's field offices at the same time.

For those watching on closed circuit, I ask that you refrain from switching to the basketball games at noon. I'm talking to you too, Commissioner McDowell.

One of the important statistics about the FCC, which Commissioner McDowell is fond of pointing out, is that about 95% of our items are decided unanimously. And that's a testament to our shared commitment to forging consensus. For that commitment, I thank you.

We're also very fortunate to have with us several of our Bureau and Office Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs, who will be speaking a little later. At the beginning of my term as Chairman I set a goal of making the FCC a model of excellence in government.

I also said that this Commission would be relentlessly focused on unleashing innovation, encouraging investment, promoting competition and protecting consumers.

Well, our Bureau and Office leadership are the ones making sure we're living up to those words, every single day. Thank you to each of you for your commitment to our mission.

I wanted to hold this town hall today simply to say this: thank you. It's amazing how much you can get done in a year and a half, and it's all because of your hard work.

Over that time, thanks to your work, we've focused the agency on unleashing the opportunities of communications technology to benefit all Americans.

Back in 2009, not many people were talking about the importance of broadband to our economy. Today, they are.

Broadband has become the vital organizing principle of much of our work, and every single bureau and office has contributed substantially to our efforts to drive broadband deployment and adoption, even as we continue our important work with respect to existing communications and media technologies. Indeed, as all five Commissioners said in a Joint Statement issued in connection with America's first-ever National Broadband Plan, "working to make sure that America has world-leading high-speed broadband networks—both wired and wireless—lies at the very core of the FCC's mission in the 21st century."

Yesterday, we celebrated the 1st anniversary of the release of that plan – crafted by an incredible team of FCC veterans and new recruits who worked around the clock for months, consulting offline and online with literally thousands of people from multiple backgrounds and disciplines. The Broadband Plan laid out a strategic agenda for the agency on the greatest infrastructure challenge of the early 21st century, with big goals, like creating the largest market in the world for ultra-high-speed Internet access by 2020, and ensuring that every American, no matter where they live, has affordable access to robust broadband service, and the means and skills to subscribe if they so choose.

Thanks to you, we have begun to put that agenda into action. The last year and a half was one of the busiest and most productive periods in the history of the FCC.

Because of your efforts over the course of 2010, we've been able to act on dozens of rulemakings on our top priorities like making more spectrum available for mobile broadband, reforming universal service, and removing barriers to broadband deployment.

We've unleashed spectrum - the largest release of spectrum in 25 years devoted to unlicensed use - in our TV White Spaces proceeding, and crafted tower siting rules that will help Americans get mobile connectivity faster.

Thanks to your excellent work, we've taken strong and balanced steps to preserve Internet freedom and openness.

We've adopted an important fix to CableCARD, closed the terrestrial loophole, and are doing even more to enable consumer-friendly innovation and competition on the video platform.

You've worked to reform our approach to satellite policy for the 21st century, and provided support in times of crisis to Haiti and Japan.

You've taken important steps to bring emergency response into the 21st century, and move toward public safety interoperability.

You've taken important steps to bring our E-Rate program into the 21st century, empowering schools and libraries with new flexibility to help more people, at less cost, with new technologies like mobile broadband.

And thanks to you, the Commission has taken strong measures to protect consumers in the communications marketplace from problems like mystery fees, resulting in the largest payment in FCC history.

Looking forward, I can't tell you that the pace of our work is going to slow down. But the least I can do is thank you.

And tell you that this work really does matter for the American people.

Because of the work you've been doing, more people are able to find jobs on the Internet; more students can use the Internet both in and out of school; more Americans will be made safer because of our efforts on public safety and next-generation 9-1-1; and billions of dollars of private investment is being invested to improve our wired and wireless infrastructure.

But our collective successes have not only been on the policy side, but also in changing the way we do business. Because of your dedication to this agency, and your commitment to working together, OPM identified the FCC as the most improved agency in the federal government in 2010. That's no small feat!

Together, we have turned the page on the past and improved the way this agency operates, breaking down the silos separating bureaus and fostering the healthy debate & discussion that ensures that we will incorporate the best ideas into our policies. Thanks to you, lawyers, economists, engineers, teachers and doctors, as well as business and investment professionals are all in the same room at the same table, tackling important issues from diverse perspectives to achieve common goals.

We have maintained a commitment to focusing on facts and data, and understanding the benefits of proposed actions, as well as their costs.

We've dramatically reformed and improved the way we review transactions, thanks to great teams running processes that are fair, thorough, efficient, and protect the public interest as we're required to do.

And we have used new media to open up the digital doors of this agency, empowering a broad range of people across America, from teachers to small business owners to a whole range of citizens, to participate in our proceedings directly. We've done this through workshops streamed online, the FCC's first blog, and a Twitter feed that now has almost 400,000 followers. You've also done a great job putting the finishing touches on our Technology Experience Center that will allow employees to engage with new technologies, and our fantastic new website, to be launched next month.

These innovative changes to our processes relate directly to our success in creating effective policy, and I want to encourage you to keep thinking about ways we can rethink the way we work.

Finally, I'm sure you'd all agree that there are few places more exciting to work than the FCC – few places that hold the keys to the communications and technological future. We are literally on the cutting edge and what you're doing, every day, is helping to unleash a torrent of innovation. I'm even more optimistic about where our country and this agency are going than I was a year ago, and excited about the contributions each of you are making to solving our nation's communications challenges. In that spirit, it's good to remind ourselves of the words of John F. Kennedy in his State of the Union address fifty years ago:

“Let the public service be a proud and lively career. And let every man and woman who works in any area of our national government, in any branch, at any level, be able to say with pride and with honor in future years: 'I served the United States Government in that hour of our nation's need.'”

Thank you for that service.